

An Easter Week Devotional

The Seven Words of Christ



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During the six hours when Christ was nailed to the cross and lifted up as our Redeemer to atone for our sins, He uttered seven profound statements historically referred to as the Seven Last Words of Christ. These words are windows that allow us to see the heart of our Savior. They are declarations that reveal the glory and majesty of a life that is dead to self and alive to a passionate embrace of God's glory. Thus they are sign posts for us in terms of living lives for our Savior.

Many of us wonder what our last words will be as we leave our earthly tent. The words of Christ are a reminder that, by and large, men and women die the way they live. The life of Christ was utterly abandoned to the glory of God, thoughtfully committed to obedience to the Word of God, and consistently focused upon the needs of others. These words sought out those who were lost, without a Savior, who had a need to hear and see the Gospel of grace from His lips and displayed in His life. These words sought out His disciples and followers because they needed to be equipped, challenged, encouraged and renewed consistently by the grace and truth that flowed from His lips.

As we devotionally walk through Holy Week to commemorate the atoning death and celebrate the victorious resurrection of Christ, we frame each and every step with these seven words of glory and grace.



Palm Sunday

*“Father, forgive them, for they
know not what they do.”*

Daily Reading - Luke 23:26-34

The initial Word in the first of the Seven Words (or sayings) uttered by Christ on the cross begins with *Father*. He spoke intimately and directly to the One who had sent Him into the world to save sinners and now He called upon His Father to forgive those who had mockingly, profanely, thoughtlessly and blasphemously laid their hands upon Him, the very Son of God, to crucify Him. Christ's response is consistent with His mission as a Redeemer of sinners and simultaneously reveals His role as Mediator and Intercessor between sinners and a God of absolute holiness who will “by no means leave the guilty unpunished.” His intercessory mediation for the guilty at this moment reveals His future calling in heaven after the resurrection and ascension until He comes again. Even now, as you read this, our Savior continues this intercessory prayer as “He ever lives to intercede for us.” Our Lord, who in life ever lived to pray, now lives to pray forever on our behalf. In His death he remained consistent with His life...praying for sinners. Finally, this Word establishes for us the pattern of intercessory prayer to guide us throughout all of our life until we meet our glorious Savior. Just as our Savior did, we are called to “pray without ceasing” for one another.

Devotional Thought 1

Lord, cause my heart to cherish You as my Redeemer and ascended Savior, my present Mediator and Intercessor. Remind me that there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus, who ever lives to intercede for me. Therefore “nothing can separate me from the love of God in Jesus Christ.”



Devotional Thought 2

Lord, allow me to embrace with a joyful heart a life of intercessory prayer that focuses upon Your glory, the salvation of lost sinners and the well-being of Your people. My prayers will start with intercession focused upon my family, but I will not stop with them as I pray for Your family and for those who yet need to be brought by grace into the family of God.

Devotional Thought 3

Thank You, Jesus, for praying for me and thank You for allowing me to pray to You for others.



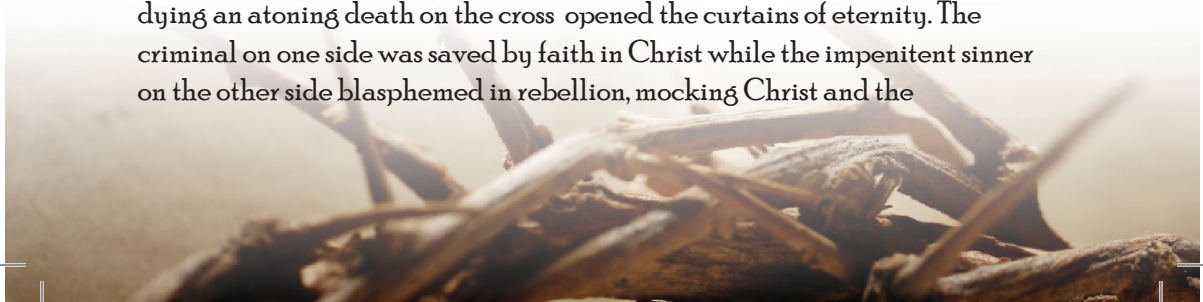
Monday

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise”

Daily Reading - Luke 23:35-43

The second word of Christ gloriously reveals a divine answer to the first word. In the first word He prays for sinners to be forgiven. In the second word, God's saving grace brings a criminal on a cross beside Christ to salvation and forgiveness of sins even though moments before he had been mocking the Son of God with the crowd and the criminal hanging at the other side of Jesus. The plea from the thief, "Jesus, remember me," was answered immediately. The redeeming grace of Christ that was about to be purchased through His atoning death was instantaneously assigned to this repentant sinner as he was brought from death to life. The One who not only endured the physical pain of the crucifixion but also drank the cup of eternal condemnation, declared forgiveness and the blessing of eternal life to the repentant thief next to Him. This sinner suffered agonizing physical pains, but gave vent to the pain of his sins by confessing his need of a Savior: "Jesus, remember me."

There on Calvary, suspended between Heaven and earth, the One dying an atoning death on the cross opened the curtains of eternity. The criminal on one side was saved by faith in Christ while the impenitent sinner on the other side blasphemed in rebellion, mocking Christ and the



newly-redeemed thief at the same time. Not only did Christ reveal that salvation is assigned in a moment of time having been purchased by Christ for eternity, but He also revealed that when believers pass into glory they pass into “Paradise” with Him, enjoying the blessings of personal and unbroken intimacy with Christ. By the end of that appointed day, the saved sinner-thief became a saint by grace and was to be with Christ in the glory of eternity.

Devotional Thought 1

If you call upon the Lord by confession and repentance with utter dependence upon Him, salvation is immediate. It doesn't come if one endures a test nor if one proves himself worthy. It comes instantaneously from Christ, whose shed blood immediately forgives us from all of our sins and His righteousness, likewise, clothes us with an absolute perfection. *“Truly, truly he who believes in Me has eternal life.”*

Devotional Thought 2

God's grace not only saves us freely and fully when we call upon Christ, it also changes us and transforms our desires, actions and words. Look how the blasphemous thief (see also Matthew 27:44) became a saved worshipper with reverence and joy. Moments before he had profaned Christ; then he praised Him and petitioned Him for salvation. The saved dying thief had only minutes to live, but even in that short frame of time he manifested the glorious truth that God's grace receives sinners and also transforms them. The blasphemy of the thief ceased and the praise of a redeemed sinner resounded. He became a worshipper, a witness and an evangelist as he pleaded with his fellow thief to repent of his sins and confess Christ as his Savior.

Devotional Thought 3

This word makes clear that there is no intermediate holding place after death. No purgatory. Although there is not yet the final state of a new body for a New Heavens and New Earth at the death of a believer, there is an immediate state of joy and intimacy with the Lord in the Paradise of glory. As Paul confessed in his Epistles, consistent with this Word of Christ: *“absent from the body, present with the Lord.”*



Tuesday

“Woman here is your Son! Then, He said to the disciple, here is your mother!”

Daily Reading - John 19:23-27

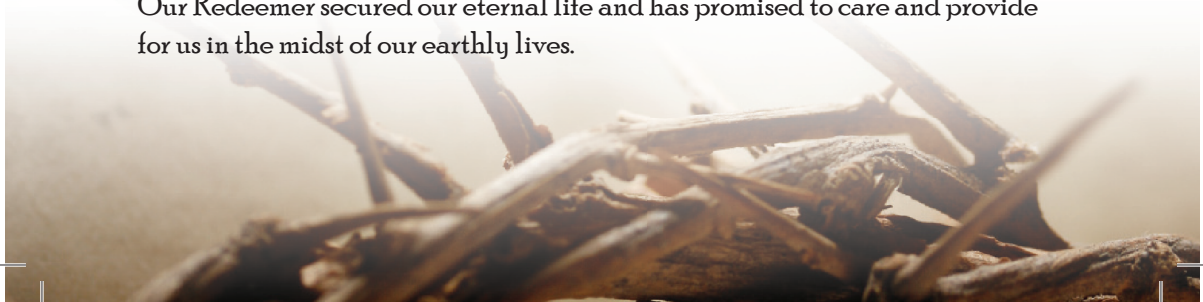
Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not just the Creator of the world by His spoken Word and the Redeemer of sinners as the Incarnate Word, but He is also the Sustainer and good Provider as revealed in His third Word. Here He obeyed the fifth Commandment and honored His mother by providing for her care at His death. While never addressed, it seems that Joseph has already died and that Jesus, as the eldest son, provided for His mother. He did so by making sure that John, a devoted disciple, would care for Mary by treating her as his own mother – which he did until her death. At the same time, with the word “woman” He manifested a leveling of the intimacy with all of the saved throughout all of eternity since everyone of the redeemed are in the family of God as brothers and sisters – even Mary. Jesus personally causes *“all things to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.”* He provided for His mother and simultaneously revealed to us that this very same special Hand of blessing weaves a tapestry of our good and God’s glory to all who belong to Him, even in the midst of a broken world. The same Savior who moments before opened the door of eternal life for a dying thief now opens a door of temporal care for an earthly mother through John, His disciple and participant in Christ’s embryonic Church.

Devotional Thought 1

This Word reveals the consistency of God’s promise to us as believers: many things in this sin-filled world are not good, but He, in the midst of our circumstances, will work all things together for our good and His praise.

Devotional Thought 2

Our Redeemer secured our eternal life and has promised to care and provide for us in the midst of our earthly lives.



Devotional Thought 3

Although Jesus has available to Him all things to fulfill His promises of Divine Providence, He delights in using His choice instruments: His people, like John and us, His Church empowered by His Spirit.



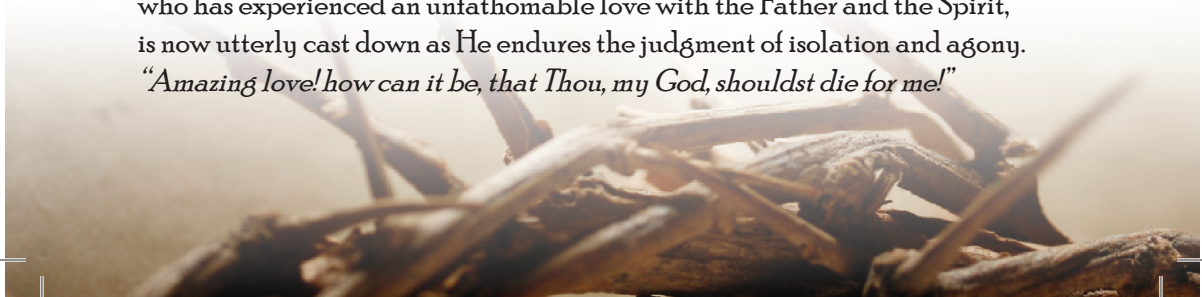
Wednesday

“My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?”

Daily Reading - Matthew 27:45-51

It is here that Jesus “descends into Hell” as His Soul endures God’s wrath to satisfy the holiness and justice of God on our behalf. Christ’s death was neither a martyr’s death nor a model death. It was a vicarious and atoning death - vicarious in that He took our place; atoning in that He received upon Himself the just wrath of God for our sins that we might be redeemed. Christ, as He uttered these words, was paying the ransom to redeem His people that they might be reconciled to God. He was fulfilling His promise to the Father: *“all whom you have given me; I lose not one but raise them up on the last day.”* Christ gave His life to purchase us by paying the debt that He did not owe, for all of us who had a debt we could not pay.

Scripture says that Hell has two identifying marks: the absolute isolation of darkness and the unspeakable torment of fire. These marks are announced by the darkness that descended at the sixth hour and the cry of Christ, “I’m thirsty,” revealing His torment. But these external manifestations were of small significance compared to the hell of torment and isolation that descended upon the soul of Christ on the cross. His isolation and darkness of soul was revealed by the cry: *“why have you forsaken me?”* The agony of His soul was revealed by the cry, *“My God, my God...”* The Son, on the Cross and under the judgment of God for our sins, could not call out, *“Father.”* This One, who has experienced an unfathomable love with the Father and the Spirit, is now utterly cast down as He endures the judgment of isolation and agony. *“Amazing love! how can it be, that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!”*



Devotional Thought 1

How sinful and spiritually impotent we are. We are unable to save ourselves, and our helplessness can only be remedied by the gift of a sufficient Savior who can “save a wretch” like you and me.

Devotional Thought 2

God’s grace is never at the expense of His holiness, and God, out of His great love, provided ample payment to satisfy His righteous demands. That payment was the atoning death of Jesus who bore our hell on the Cross. Because of it we may receive a “free gift” of salvation from the penalty of our sins and eternal life.

Devotional Thought 3

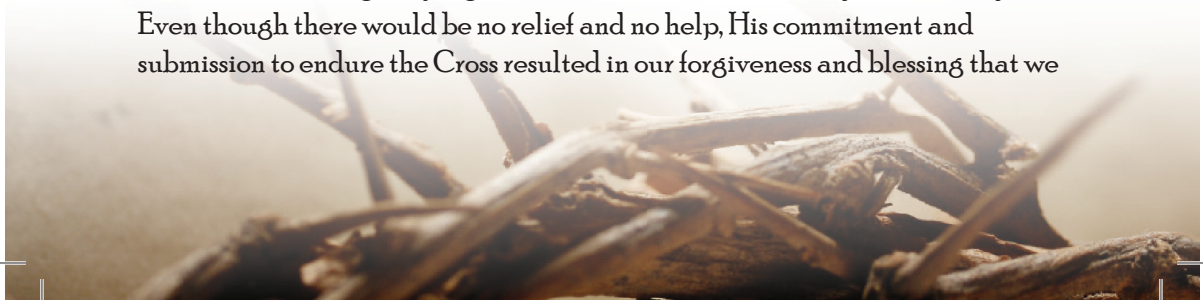
We are now exposed to “the cup” of suffering that Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, had pleaded with the Father to be spared. Yet it was “the cup” that He was willing to drink for two reasons: to secure the the salvation of His people ~ you and me ~ and to do the will of the Father, even though it required laying down His life and becoming on the cross the thing He utterly despised ~ sin. In order to receive upon Himself what we deserved ~ the eternal hell of judgment ~ He drank this “cup” to the bottom that we might drink the cup of eternal life.



Thursday “*I am thirsty*”

Daily Reading ~ John 19:28-29

Upon the cross, Jesus was placed. Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. Fully God and fully man. The early church had no difficulties in affirming His Deity but for three hundred years the Church struggled to understand His full humanity. Here with this Word from the Cross, Jesus reveals His humanity in its fullness. The physical pain and the torment of enduring our judgment is now vented with the cry, “I am thirsty.” Even though there would be no relief and no help, His commitment and submission to endure the Cross resulted in our forgiveness and blessing that we



might drink of the water from which we will never thirst again. Christ's mortal frailty is displayed, His anguish is revealed, His humanity is affirmed. By a man came death – Adam. By a man has come the resurrection of the dead – a second Adam, Jesus Christ. Fully God and fully man. Timothy was instructed by the Apostle Paul, *“There is one God and one mediator between God and man...the Man Christ Jesus.”* Therefore, no matter where we go in our Christian life, we never trod virgin territory. There is no trial that has overtaken us that is not “common to man” and Jesus is the Author and Pioneer of our faith and in His humanity he has gone before us. Therefore, you may go to Him confidently and freely for He has been “tempted in every point, like unto us” as the Son of Man “yet without sin.”

Devotional Thought 1

Knowing that only a man can take the place of men to bring salvation, these words reveal that not only was our Savior worthy in His righteousness to take our place and not only was He willing but also, He is qualified to save us in that He is a true man with all of our human frailties, yet gloriously sinless.

Devotional Thought 2

No matter what faces us in life we have an Intercessor and a Mediator, Jesus, our Redeemer, who is able to comfort us because He has not only victoriously faced what is before us and triumphantly experienced what comes upon us but has also endured much more than we can imagine. Therefore, we may confidently know that when we come to him in our frailties and fears He is fully able to empathize, to comfort and to intercede on our behalf.

Devotional Thought 3

Since the agonies of Hell are forever and our Savior has provided a redemption that grants the joy of everlasting life which is forever, then, why would we ever contemplate enduring the thirst of eternal condemnation, the agony of torment and the isolation of separation? Jesus offers us a cup from which if we drink, we will never thirst again – the Cup of blessing filled to the brim with grace for all who come to Him as Lord and Savior. He is able to save us in that He is a true man with all of our human frailties, yet gloriously sinless.

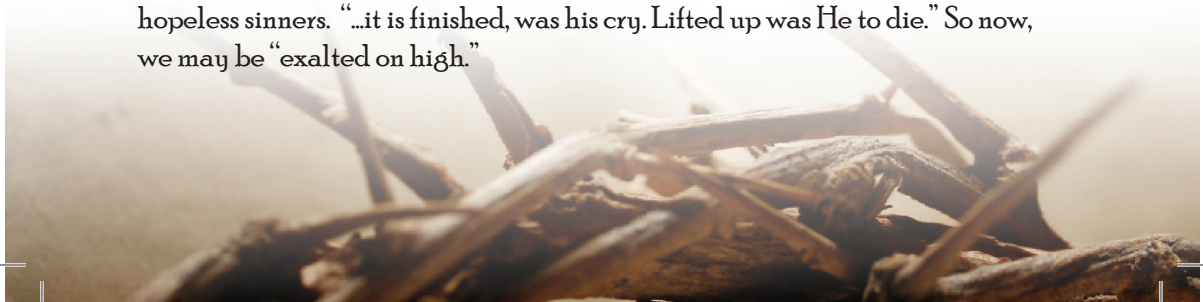


Good Friday

"It is finished"

Daily Reading ~ John 19:30-37

In the original language, this Word from the Cross is one word and in English it takes three words but it simply means the debt has been paid. The obligation fulfilled. The ransom delivered. Or, as we love to hear in life...paid in full. To save sinners, Jesus had to give an atoning death in place of all those who would trust him as Lord and Savior and so He paid it, fully and completely. Now the word of victory is expelled through His lips, from a body wracked by pain and deprived of breath. It penetrates the ears of those present and it echoes into glory. The sound in decibels may not have been loud due to the full impact of the excruciating death that He was experiencing but the content of these words amounted to the trumpet sound of victory, the shout of triumph and the praise of God as a Redeemer of sinners. Christ Himself reveals the atoning death was complete – the payment had been made in full. Now the Cross of death becomes the Cross of life. The humiliation of a crucifixion had become the exaltation of triumph for sinners now saved by grace. All that was required to save all of His people from all of their sins for all of eternity had now been paid. The Scripture fulfilled, the Psalm of a victorious Messiah is now sung. "He has seen the travail of His soul and is satisfied." Nothing else is needed. An unfathomable reservoir of redemption has been filled to the brim. It cannot be sounded to its depth nor emptied of its volume. It will now be lavishly poured out as the Balm of Gilead, the River of Life and the Ransom of Redemption by God's grace through His Son. All who belong to Him will surely be brought to glory and because of it none will be lost. There is nothing more satisfying in human experience than to be given a mission and finish it in triumph. So, it is at this moment. Not an ordinary task of life has been finished but the extraordinary mission of redeeming helpless and hopeless sinners. "...it is finished, was his cry. Lifted up was He to die." So now, we may be "exalted on high."



Devotional Thought 1

All who have trusted in Christ may have full assurance of Salvation because their Savior has declared that the payment of our redemption has been made and “it is finished.” Our assurance comes not from our imagination but from His Word. Not from our efforts but His atoning death. He has declared it and we believe it.

Devotional Thought 2

Each Christian personally and the Church corporately must always reject any and every teaching that would detract from the fullness of Christ’s redeeming work. While Christians can and do through gratitude, love and obedience do many “good works” they are never a part of our acceptance and redemption. They are always a result of our salvation. We do not work for salvation. Our Savior has already declared that his saving work is finished. Yet, while we do not work for salvation each sinner, saved by grace, will increasingly, joyfully, passionately and gratefully work for their Savior. His work is the grounds of our salvation. Our work is the fruit of our salvation.

Devotional Thought 3

While the work of our Redemption is finished, the blessing and consequences of that work continue until Jesus comes again. That work of redemption by Christ on the Cross is finished. Therefore we may now do the work of gathering the redeemed. This work is called the Great Commission and is yet unfinished. It is the harvest work of His finished redeeming work on the Cross. Therefore we, who have been saved, because redemption is “finished,” may now finish the work of bringing others to the Redeemer.



Saturday

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”

Daily Reading - Luke 23:44-49

The first word from the lips of Jesus on the Cross began with “Father.” In His seventh and final word, the first utterance again is, “Father.” From beginning to end our Savior displays love, devotion and confidence in God, His Father. He now gives up His life, and do remember that “no man takes” the life of Jesus - He gave it up freely. Even His last breath is the result of Christ’s petition commending His Spirit to the One who had sent Him into this earth so that we might be saved. And because we are saved, this same God is now our Father and this same God gives us His Spirit so that we too may cry, “Abba Father.”

Isaac Watts captured this moment in the hymn that he implores us to “survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died.” He wrote from his heart what we may now sing from ours. “See, from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?” Our Savior on the Cross called for our forgiveness; bore the fruit of redemption by declaring a dying thief saved; displayed His Good Providence in the care of His earthly mother; descended into hell by enduring our judgment; revealed His full humanity through the agonies of thirst; has announced the victory of redemption completed; and returned to glory by His own volition.

Yet, one more act of humiliation remained. He was laid in a borrowed tomb. But, praise God, the tomb could not hold Him. The Father who received His spirit declared the victory through the power of the Holy Spirit by bringing Him forth in triumphant resurrection. The One who humbled Himself to death, “even death on a Cross,” was exalted. He who humbled Himself at the will of His Father to save us from our sins was exalted by the will of the Father through His resurrection, His Ascension, His present intercession and our glorious anticipation that the King is coming again! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!



Devotional Thought 1

Christ, the Redeemer. This last word from the Cross reveals the intimacy that we may enjoy with God through Christ as our Redeemer. The glorious, holy, majestic, almighty God is now our Father, and we may live with confidence that our Father is omnipotent and omnipresent; He saves us from our sins, takes us through life, grows us by grace and will receive us into Glory. If Christ has been made your Redeemer by faith, then what the Father did for His Son – receiving Him at His death – He has also promised, as your Father, to do for you.

Devotional Thought 2

Jesus, in His death and through this word, proved what the Scriptures promise us “...*absent from the body, present with the Lord.*” It is into God’s presence that we flee when we leave this body and we will be with Him until our bodies are raised in glory to prepare us for a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Devotional Thought 3

By and large, men and women die the way they live. Jesus displayed this as He lived with confidence and commitment to His Father and then died with that same confidence and commitment to His Father. But more than this general truth, there is an everlasting truth absolutely and infallibly promised to the people of God: “*as your days are, so shall your strength be.*” On our dying day, we can be assured that we will be given dying grace. You may not have such dying grace now, but when the divinely appointed day for you to meet your God arrives, His grace will be sufficient and He will “commend you” into His presence forever.

Summary Thought

Is this Savior yours? If so, praise His Name. If not, then why not? Remember the simple prayer – “Lord, remember me.” Do as the thief on the cross did and call upon the Lord today. Today is the day of salvation. Say to Him, “O Lord, I am a sinner, unable to save myself. Jesus, just as I am, I turn from my sin and come to You alone as my Lord and Savior.” Please come to the Lord if you have not. Jesus says, “Come.” The Spirit says, “Come.” The Bride of Christ, His Church says, “Come.” Come to Him and live forever in glory with Him, our Risen Savior.

